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DE RUCNDT #0269 0761402
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FM USMISSION USUN NEW YORK
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 6102
INFO RUCNFUR/DARFUR COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
RUEHGG/UN SECURITY COUNCIL COLLECTIVE PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L USUN NEW YORK 000269

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 03/16/2019

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SUBJECT: AMBASSADOR RICE URGES UGANDAN PRESIDENT TO
PRESSURE BASHIR ON NGO EXPULSIONS

Classified By: Ambassador Susan E. Rice for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

¶1. (C) Summary: On March 16, Ambassador Rice spoke by phone with Ugandan President Museveni to urge him to speak with Sudanese President Bashir concerning the recent expulsion of 13 NGOs from Darfur. Rice said that, even if Uganda's position on the ICC indictment of Bashir differed from the U.S. position, at a minimum, we could agree that expulsion of humanitarian NGOs is a decision that should not be tolerated.

Museveni agreed to speak with Bashir, indicating that he would inform Rice about his conversation and that Uganda would publicly state that interference with relief efforts in Sudan is not acceptable. End Summary.

¶2. (C) Ambassador Rice called President Museveni primarily to discuss Sudan, but began the March 16 conversation by expressing condolences for the March 9 plane crash into Uganda's Lake Victoria which was carrying both equipment and peacekeepers to the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM). Rice thanked Museveni for Ugandan's contribution to AMISOM. Regarding Sudan, Rice noted that even though the U.S. and Uganda have taken ostensibly different positions regarding the ICC arrest warrant against Bashir, we have common goals for our policy in Sudan. Rice said that the ICC decision should not impede progress on implementation of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) that ended the conflict between northern and southern Sudan, nor should it slow down deployment of the joint AU/UN Hybrid Mission in Darfur (UNAMID).

¶3. (C) Turning to Bashir's decision to expel humanitarian NGOs, Ambassador Rice said the United States is deeply concerned that lifesaving assistance for more than fifty percent of the population in Darfur would be affected. She stated that this is a concern shared at the highest level of U.S. government -- by President Obama and Secretary Clinton. She noted that the UN estimates 1.5 million people could be at risk of losing their lives. Rice also said that these expulsions -- if they do result in the loss of lives -- could become the basis for additional charges of genocide and war crimes against Bashir. She asked Museveni to speak with Bashir and to convey that it is not acceptable to use the lives of his people as a weapon in his fight against the ICC.

¶4. (C) Museveni agreed that the expulsion of NGOs from Darfur was not acceptable and said he would speak with Bashir. Museveni said that he would convey Uganda's willingness to take a public position on the expulsions should Bashir not reverse his decision. Ambassador Rice responded that there should be AU solidarity on the issue of expulsions and that the AU should not stand by and allow 1.5 million people in Darfur to die. She offered to speak to any of Museveni's colleagues, if that would be helpful. Museveni said that Uganda would help to build a coalition on the issue of the expulsions.

¶5. (C) Ambassador Rice also conveyed to Museveni that the United States' strong preference was not to escalate tensions with Sudan and not to adopt a confrontational approach. The

United States would prefer to work together, with the Government of Sudan, to implement the CPA and to peacefully resolve the conflict in Darfur. However, Rice said that if the GOS persists in violence against its own people, the United States would be forced to examine other forms of pressure that could be applied against the GOS.

Rice